

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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#### **2012 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release #71**

#### **Summer Update #7, Districts 1-6**

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

#### **Assessment Projects**

##### Andreafsky River weir/USFWS

The cumulative passage through July 22 is approximately 1,900 Chinook which is below the average of 3,600 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 53,000 which is below the median of 59,300 fish for this date.

##### Pilot Station sonar project/ADFG

Chinook salmon passage at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 106,000 through July 22, which is below the historical average of 147,000 for this date. It is also below the average of 131,000 for historical late years for this date. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 2.1 million which is above the historical median of 1.3 million.

##### Anvik River sonar project/ADFG

The summer chum salmon passage is estimated to be approximately 469,000 through July 22, which is above the historical median of 467,000 for this date.

##### Gisasa River weir/USFWS

The cumulative passage through July 22 is approximately 1,000 Chinook which is below the average of 2,000 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 72,000 which is well above the median of 33,000 fish for this date.

##### Henshaw Creek Weir/TCC

The cumulative passage through July 22 is approximately 640 Chinook which is below the average of 850 for this date. The cumulative passage for summer chum is approximately 182,000 which is well above the median of 58,000 fish for this date.

#### Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/Zuray

The cumulative expanded count through July 22 is approximately 3,100 Chinook which is above the average of 2,100 for this date. The cumulative expanded count for summer chum is approximately 1,500 which is above the median of 300 fish for this date.

#### Eagle Sonar/ADFG

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage at Eagle sonar is estimated to be approximately 5,300 through July 22.

#### Chena River Tower/ADFG

The cumulative counts through July 20 are 785 Chinook salmon and 335 summer chum salmon.

#### Salcha River Tower/BSFA

The Salcha River tower became fully operational on July 18. The cumulative counts through July 22 are 1,488 Chinook salmon and 552 summer chum salmon.

#### Chinook and Summer Chum Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets through July 9 (Big Eddy) and July 15 (Middle Mouth) was 2% age-4, 30% age-5, 66% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females comprised 63% of fish sampled. The sample size was 807 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.25-inch Big Eddy drift test fishery through July 13 was 1% age-4, 33% age-5, 64% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. Females comprised 61% of fish sampled. The sample size was 219 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 7.5-inch Mountain Village drift test fishery through July 11 was 2% age-4, 45% age-5, 49% age-6, and 4% age-7 fish. Females comprised 44% of fish sampled. The sample size was 405 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the subsistence harvest collected by fishermen contracted by the Association of Village Council Presidents through July 12 in Districts 1 and 2 was 5% age-4, 56% age-5, 38% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Females comprised 26% of fish sampled. The sample size was 526 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the incidental commercial harvest through July 13 (Period 10) in District 1 was 19% age-4, 50% age-5, 30% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Females comprised 30% of fish sampled. The sample size was 629 fish.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the incidental commercial harvest through July 11 (Period 3) in District 2 was 33% age-4, 45% age-5, and 22% age-6 fish. Females comprised 44% of fish sampled. The sample size was 9 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch Dall Point drift test fishery through July 9 was 62% age-4, 32% age-5, and 6% age-6 fish. Females comprised 38% of fish sampled. The sample size was 431 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through July 15 (Big Eddy) and July 15 (Middle Mouth) was 69% age-4, 26% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. Females comprised 57% of fish sampled. The sample size was 1,576 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the commercial harvest through July 13 (Period 10) in District 1 was 71% age-4, 24% age-5, and 5% age-6 fish. Females comprised 49% of fish sampled. The sample size was 787 fish.

## **Assessment**

Based on the assessment information to date, the Chinook salmon run is poor. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 106,000 Chinook salmon through July 22 is well below the historical average of 147,000 for this date, and is also below the average passage estimates at this point for late run years, of approximately 131,000. Current data suggest the 2012 first quarter at Pilot Station sonar was approximately June 24. The median was approximately June 28 and the third quarter was approximately July 2. These dates are preliminary until the Chinook salmon run is completed. For late run years, on average more than 99% of the run had passed Pilot Station sonar by July 22. Based on historical late year run timing and current data, the 2012 Chinook salmon run size is coming in at the lower end of the preseason outlook estimate of 109,000, or potentially lower.

Currently, all escapement monitoring projects for Chinook salmon (Andreafsky River weir, Gisasa River weir, Henshaw Creek weir, Chena River tower, Salcha River tower) have estimated passages well below the historical average passage estimates for this date. The first Chinook salmon at Eagle sonar was detected on July 2, approximately 22 days after the first Chinook salmon passed by Pilot Station sonar. The Eagle sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 5,300 through July 22 is well below the historical average of 23,500 for this date. It is still early for the escapement projects because of the late run timing, but due to the poor run size, escapements may be lower than historical averages in some or most escapement streams.

Summer chum salmon passage through July 18 at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 2.13 million, which is above the historical median of 1.36 million for this date. The first 2012 first quarter at Pilot Station sonar for summer chum salmon was June 24. The median was approximately June 29 and the third quarter was approximately July 5. The escapement goal of >40,000 summer chum salmon has been achieved at E.F. Andreafsky River with approximately 53,000 summer chum salmon passage through July 22. The Anvik River escapement goal of 350,000 – 700,000 summer chum salmon has also been achieved with 469,000 estimated passage through July 22. Preliminary estimates suggest the 2012 summer chum run was at the upper end of the preseason outlook estimate of 1.5-2.0 million.

## **Current Management**

Conservation measures have been discontinued in Districts 1-4 now that the majority of Chinook salmon have passed through these districts. Consistent with management actions taken in downriver districts, additional measures are being implemented in Districts 5 and 6 in order to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement.

The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

**Coastal District:** The Coastal District is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller

**Districts 1, 2, 3:** Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after each commercial fishing period. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

**The Innoko River:** Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

**Subdistrict 4-A (from  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point):** This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A is currently open for a 48-hour period that will close at 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 24.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 25, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A will be open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays.

**Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek):** This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby. Subsistence salmon fishing is open for one 48-hour fishing period from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 25, until 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 27.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 29, subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C will be open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Sundays to 6:00 p.m. Fridays.

In District 4, fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

**Koyukuk River:** Subsistence salmon fishing in the Koyukuk River is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

**Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C:** Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice. The department will notify fishermen by July 26 concerning the next subsistence salmon fishing period and schedule for Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C.

In an effort to protect Chinook salmon as they pass through this long section of river, Subdistrict

5-D has been divided into three separate areas.

Subdistricts 5-D-Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver. Subdistrict 5-D Lower is open for one 36-hour subsistence salmon fishing period which is scheduled to close at 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 23. Subsistence salmon fishing will then be closed until further notice.

Subdistricts 5-D-Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the community of Fort Yukon. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice.

Subdistrict 5-D-Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries): This area includes the communities of Circle, and Eagle. Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed and will remain closed until further notice.

The department will notify fishermen by July 24 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule for each portion of Subdistrict 5-D.

District 6: Consistent with management actions taken in Districts 1-5, measures are being implemented in Subdistricts 6-A, 6-B, and the Old Minto Area in order to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the downstream mouth of Wood River): This area includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana. Subsistence fishing will continue to be restricted to fish wheels only. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute, closely attended while in operation, and all Chinook salmon caught must be returned to the water alive. Gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches will not be allowed to be used. These gear restrictions will be in effect during the next subsistence salmon fishing period scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 23, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 25. Beginning 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 27, gear restrictions will be discontinued in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B.

The Old Minto Area: Subsistence fishing in the Old Minto Area is currently open and will continue to be restricted to fish wheels only. Fish wheels must be equipped with a chute, closely attended while in operation, and all Chinook salmon caught must be returned to the water alive. Gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches will not be allowed to be used. These gear restrictions will be in effect for the remainder of the ongoing subsistence salmon fishing period scheduled, until 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 25. Beginning 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 27, gear restrictions will be discontinued in the Old Minto Area.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River): This area includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha. The personal use salmon fishing is closed and will remain closed until further notice in an effort to conserve Chinook salmon. The department will notify fishermen concerning the next personal

use salmon fishing period and schedule for Subdistrict 6-C once the need to conserve Chinook salmon is over.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

## **Commercial Fishing**

The summer season commercial fishery is over in Districts 1 and 2. Ten commercial fishing periods occurred in District 1 and six commercial fishing periods occurred in District 2. The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for Districts 1 and 2 combined is approximately 206,000 summer chum salmon, and 2,400 Chinook salmon have been reported as caught but not sold.

### Preliminary harvest information for Subdistrict 4-A

Thirteen commercial fishing periods have been announced through July 20. Commercial fishing gear is restricted to fish wheels only which must be manned at all times of operation. All Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must be immediately returned to the water alive.

Currently, Subdistrict 4-A is open for a 168-hour fishing period which is scheduled to close at 8:00 p.m. Friday, July 27.

The preliminary cumulative commercial harvest for Subdistrict 4-A through July 22 is approximately 84,500 summer chum salmon. A total of 25 Chinook salmon have been caught and released in the fishery to date.

Fishermen will be notified by July 26 regarding additional commercial fishing periods.

### Preliminary harvest information for District 6

An emergency regulation adopted by the Board of Fisheries (BOF) on July 17 allows the department to open summer chum salmon directed commercial fishing periods in District 6 during time of Chinook salmon conservation with fish wheels only. Fish wheels must be manned at all times during operations, and all Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must immediately be released to the water alive. This regulatory change implemented by the BOF is effective for the 2012 fishing season.

Two 42-hour commercial fishing periods have been announced to date. The preliminary harvest for the first commercial fishing period in District 6 is approximately 360 summer chum salmon.

Period #2: 6:00 p.m. Monday, July 23, until 12:00 noon Wednesday, July 25

Fishermen will be notified by July 25 regarding additional commercial fishing periods.

Recorded fishery announcements and updates will be available 24 hours a day at 949-1731 or 1-866-479-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the Fairbanks ADF&G office at (907) 459-7274.

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